

Stephen Kinzer at FFF Conference 2008, 4 of 6

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdOL-nZ5IOA> (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hdOL-nZ5IOA>)

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Stephen Kinzer on "Regime Change: Promise and Peril" at the Future of Freedom Foundation's <http://fff.org> Restoring the Republic, 2008.

Stephen Kinzer is an American author and newspaper reporter. He is a veteran New York Times correspondent who has reported from more than fifty countries on five continents. During the 1980s he covered revolution and social upheaval in Central America. In 1990, he was promoted to bureau chief of the Berlin bureau and covered the growth of Eastern and Central Europe as they emerged from Soviet rule.

Playlist of Kinzer's lecture: http://www.youtube.com/view_play_list?p=25CC550549F509ED

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and here's the phrase that he used to describe what he was afraid that the CIA might become he said American Gestapo so Truman was very unwilling to use the CIA this way now the British were really in trouble they had nothing but then at the end of 1952 the British Foreign Office and the Secret Service or electrified with the news that there had been an election in the United States and a new group was coming into power new president would be Dwight Eisenhower and new secretary of state would be John Foster Dulles who had spent his entire life as the number one international corporate lawyer for big American companies the roster of the clients that John Foster Dulles served is essentially just a list of all the giant multinational corporations of that era so the idea that a country somewhere out there in the world was bothering a big giant multinational corporation or a big British or American corporation was something that dulles took very seriously he didn't want that example to spread so finally the Americans decided we will do this they President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles reversed the Truman policy and they told the British okay we're going to do it for you we're going to go over to Iran I'm going to overthrow Prime Minister musta dick and in the beginning of August 1953 a very intrepid CIA agent crossed over into Iran with the assignment organized the overthrow of the government and it's one of those wonderful quirks of history that the agent that was sent to Iran was Kermit Roosevelt the grandson of Theodore Roosevelt who had brought America into the regime change era back in the time

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the regime change era back in the time of the spanish-american war well it only took Kermit Roosevelt three weeks to organize the overthrow of the democratic government of Iran it didn't just mean the end of prime minister most index rule it meant the end of democracy in Iran now I think many people today don't even understand that Iran was a democracy but in fact this is a country that's had a constitution for more than a hundred years and in in the early 50s it really was consolidating its democracy if we had managed to keep our hands off Iran we might have had a thriving democracy in the heart of the Muslim Middle East all these 50 years and I can hardly wrap my mind around how different a world would look if we had only managed to keep our hands off now I talked about unintended consequences in the period immediately following the overthrow of Mossadegh Americans were very happy Kermit Roosevelt was welcomed into the Oval Office of the White House and given a secret medal in a private ceremony he briefed President Eisenhower and John Foster Dulles on how it had been done oh it was so successful Dulles immediately went out and started doing this again within within a year less than a year we went off and overthrew another government down in

Guatemala so the Iran operation seemed like a great success we got rid of a guy we didn't like Mossadegh and we replaced him with a guy the Shah who would do everything we wanted so it was a perfect outcome doesn't look quite so perfect now let's try to trace very briefly what happened so the Shah ruled with increasing repression for 25 years his repression produced the explosion of the late 1970s what we call the Islamic Revolution that revolution brought to power click of fanatically anti-american

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power click of fanatically anti-american mullahs who have spent the last 25 years bitterly and sometimes very violently working to undermine American influence all over the world that revolution in Iran also weakened Iran enough so that Iran's biggest enemy next door Saddam Hussein decided to invade Iran we were so angry at Iran that we became military allies of Saddam Hussein President Reagan sent a high-level special envoy to meet twice with Saddam Hussein and of course that envoy was none other than Donald Rumsfeld I love that photo of Rumsfeld shaking Saddam's hands it says it all we provided helicopters to Iraq to drop poison gas inside Iran we provided Iraq with bombing coordinates so they could strike at targets inside Iran so that not only shook that region but it also brought the United States into its death embrace with Saddam that was the beginning of the spiral down in Iraq that led us to this present debacle the turmoil of the Islamic Revolution also led the Soviets to be terrified that there would be copycat revolutions all along their southern front that's what led them to invade Afghanistan and their invasion of Afghanistan is what led us to go over to Pakistan and spend hundreds of millions and even billions of dollars to train huge armies of jihadis to go off and kill the infidel we didn't realize that those jihadis we trained we're going to become the Taliban and the g and the infidels that they wanted to kill would be us all of that stemmed from three weeks of history in 1953 in Iran now to this day I think we're still living under the emotional overhang of the hostage crisis of 1979 we just met a member of Congress today

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we just met a member of Congress today who said that I approached someone on the floor of the house and asked him if he'd support a resolution for negotiating with Iran and he looked at me he said no they took over our embassy and seized our diplomats we are still caught in this emotional prison now I want to tell you a fascinating story that happened to me during a visit to Washington this autumn I was on a panel discussion about Iran with several other people one of them was one of the American hostages one of those diplomats actually was the chief diplomat Bruce Lang and he had been the chief of the US mission in Tehran at the time the hostages were taken I had never met him but I knew that he'd become an advocate of reconciliation with Iran and so I was eager to talk to I wanted to chat with him a little later we exchanged some emails and he told me any story which to my knowledge has never appeared in print he said I was sitting in myself in that embassy in Iran I had been in a solitary cell for about one year and one day unexpectedly the door opened and there is one of the hostage takers one of my jailers is standing there and I looked up at him and one year of rage and anger and fury exploded out of me and I started screaming at him I told them you have no right to do this is totally cruel this violates every law of God and man you cannot take innocent people hostage and treat them like this said I went on for several minutes screaming at him and he just looked very waited very patiently and when I finally ran out of breath he leaned into my cell and pointed a finger at me and in very good English said you have no right to complain because you took our whole country hostage in 1953 what that story tells me is that the hostage-taking deplorable as it was did not come out of nowhere it was not just

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not come out of nowhere it was not just an act of blind hatred and nihilism people who participated in that episode of now written about it and said it was all about 1953 what happened in 1953 we forced the shah out of the country but CIA agents working in the basement of the US Embassy arranged a coup and brought him back now it's 25 years later 1979 the Shah fled again same Shah so what's going to happen we're afraid the same thing is going to happen again CIA agents working in the basement of the US Embassy will organize a

coup and bring the Shah back we had to prevent that if we had never done that in 1953 there never would have been a hostage takeover the lesson of all this is that when you violently intervene in the political development of another country you're doing something like releasing a wheel at the top of hill you can let it go but once you let it go you have no control over how it's going to bounce or where it's going to end up American foreign policy has gotten off onto a tangent that I think our own founding fathers never envisioned and would be terrified to see we've decided there's only one way everyone in the world should live and it's the way we tell you you should live this is the essence of the policy and the face that the United States is presenting to the outside world we've decided that we've discovered something that other people can never discover and we're going to force them to do it this creates a kind of resentment that deeply undermines our security you know in the current age you cannot win wars just the way people used to win them in the past by having the biggest army in the best trained army and the most modern weapons that doesn't work anymore because the enemy that we're now facing in the world doesn't respond to

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